

A Christmas Story: Our Lady's Juggler

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A medieval legend tells us that in the country we know today as Austria the Buckhard family — a man, a woman and a child — used to amuse people at Christmas parties by reciting poetry, singing ancient troubadour ballads, and juggling.

There was never any money left over to buy presents, but the man always told his son: “Do you know why Santa Claus’s bag never gets empty, although there are so many children in the world? Because it may be full of toys, but sometimes there are more important things to be delivered, what we call “invisible gifts”. In a broken home, he tries to bring harmony and peace on the holiest night in Christianity. Where love is lacking, he deposits a seed of faith in children’s hearts. Where the future seems black and uncertain, he brings hope. In our case, the day after Father Christmas comes to visit us, we are happy to be still alive and doing our work, which is to make people happy. Never forget that”.

Time passed, the boy grew up, and one day the family passed in front of the impressive Melk Abbey, which had just been built. “Father, do you remember many years ago you told me the story of Santa Claus and his invisible gifts? I think that i received one of those gifts once: the vocation to become a priest. Would you mind if now i took my first step towards what I have always dreamed of?”

Although they really needed their son’s company, the family understood and respected the boy’s wish. They knocked at the door of the monastery and were given a loving, generous welcome by the monks, who accepted the young Buckhard as a novice.

Christmas Eve came around. And precisely on that day, a special miracle happened in Melk: Our Lady, carrying the baby Jesus in her arms, decided to descend to Earth to visit the monastery.

All the priests lined up and each of them stood proudly before the Virgin trying to pay homage to the Madonna and her Son. One of them displayed the beautiful paintings that decorated the place, another showed a copy of a Bible that had taken a hundred years to be written and illustrated, while a third recited the names of all the saints.

At the very end of the line, young Buckhard anxiously waited his turn... When it came his turn, the other priests wanted to put an end to all the homage that had been paid, since the ex-juggler had nothing important to add and might even mar the image of the abbey. ...before the reproachful gaze of his brothers, Buckhard took some oranges from his pocket and began to toss them in the air and catch them in his hands, creating a beautiful circle in the air just as he used to do when he and his family travelled to all the fairs in the region.

At that instant, the baby Jesus, lying in Our Lady’s lap, began to clap his hands with joy. And it was to young Buckhard that the Virgin held out her arms to let him hold the smiling child for a few moments.

The legend ends by saying that on account of this miracle, every two hundred years a new Buckhard knocks on the door of Melk Abbey, is welcomed in, and for the whole time he remains there he warms the hearts of all who meet him.

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